The Black Cat

January 1909

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The Black Cat

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The Desire of the Eyes.*

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.

THE train departed noisily, carrying away, it seemed to Allwin, the hum of Paris and the clatter of New York, the roar of the sea and the roar of the railroad. Deep quiet settled upon the station again. The village slept in the sun, in the dreamy peace that Allwin knew well and had so hated a few years ago.

He had hated it then because he had been its prisoner, but now it appeared to him charming. There was no stir on the long street; the rich weather-beaten brick of the old house glowed in the sun, and the silence was tempered only by the hum of the bees and the whirring of the grasshoppers. Here and there a buggy stood at a store, but as Allwin walked through the village he met few faces. He knew them all, but no one appeared to know him, and he felt somehow pleased at this, and did not speak.

It is pleasant to come home trailing clouds of glory when one is sure that their divinity will be recognized, and Allwin felt sure of recognition in the only quarter that he cared about. The glory perhaps was not so great — an honorable mention at the Paris Salon for a life-size figure in marble, which had been

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promptly sold, half a dozen paragraphs in the Paris papers, an order for a portrait bust — but he felt that he was launched. He revolved a dozen plans as he walked toward Dr. Wakefield's house; he intended to have a little exhibition of his own in New York when he could get something ready for it, to establish a working studio somewhere, to try to pick up a few commissions for the sake of ready money. But first of all he intended to be married.

If it had not been for Alice Wakefield he would never have come back to Maryland; but then, if it had not been for her he might never have left it. Life is no very easy problem for a young fellow with no money, no parents, and a certain gift for sculpture — the most expensive of the arts to cultivate, and the one that makes least popular appeal. A couple of terms at the New York Academy of Design and the Corcoran School had been all he had been able to obtain, and a block of marble was as unattainable as a star before he came to know the Wakefields.

Of course the wealthy doctor and his daughter had always been prominent in his recollections of the town, but his world had not touched theirs. Dr. Wakefield had not practised for years, but occupied himself with chemical research in private, assisted sometimes by Alice. They were often absent, in New York, in Washington, sometimes even in France or Italy, and they seemed to Allwin to lead an ideal life, full of the things his homesick heart most desired.

Allwin could scarcely remember just how he had arrived at a footing of intimacy in the Wakefield house, but, given the intimacy, it was inevitable that he should have loved Alice. No artist herself, she was born, Allwin told himself, to be the inspiration and confidante of artists. She knew the grammar of all the arts and was wise enough to confine herself to appreciation; it was only in science that she dabbled. She was beautiful with a dark glow like a ruby, subtle, brilliant, daring, and she incarnated to Allwin the whole fascination and splendor of a world of life and culture that he had only read of. He did not suspect that to her he seemed to represent the romance and daring of artistic struggle, that she knew only in books, for in the world its fermentation goes on beneath the surface.

Allwin followed her counsels religiously, and loved her desperately in silence. When he finally dared to tell her so, and learned that she also loved him, it was incredible to him; but time familiarized him with the conception. Finally he accepted more than counsel from her, and sailed away for Paris with two thousand dollars, and an oath in his heart that he would come back with a piece of marble in the Salon, or not at all.

Well, he had his marble in the Salon, he had a commission or two, but he knew that the real struggle was still to come. The door that had half opened might close again; time and chance and a desperate energy that he knew that he possessed were needed to force it wide. But an agreeable, half-conscious background to this was his coming marriage. It was no mercenary arrangement to him; he would have been proud to marry Alice without a cent; but the money was there, and he could not be blind to the incalculable advantage it would be to him in the next five years. It would give him the time and chance he needed; it would enable him to work slowly and to please himself, which is the best but slowest way of pleasing the world. Success, love and wealth — it was at least twice as much as any man had a right to expect from life, and as Allwin walked up the curved gravel path between the rows of shrubbery he felt the need of humility lest the gods should be jealous.

The mellow brick of the rambling old house preserved the grace and dignity that had charmed him before; it had been built by a Wakefield of the seventeenth century with brick brought from England. Even more than most men of his craft, Allwin loved beauty and hated the ugly and the deformed; they were deadly to him; an irresistible physical need forced them to put them out of his sight. It was the rich beauty of Alice that had first drawn him; and at the sight of the stately dwelling he realized more fully than ever what the friendship of the Wakefields had saved him from. In a life of unrelieved, sordid poverty he would have done nothing; he would have fallen to one of the fatal resources of the over-sensitive — drink or drugs or a hardened aridity of soul.

But it seemed to him that there was a strangely quiet air about the house. No one was in sight, there were no chairs on

the verandas. He noticed that the windows of Alice's room were closely shuttered, and a Virginia creeper had spread thickly across them. Yet both the occupants were at home and expecting him, he knew, and it was with a kind of chill presage that he rang the bell.

"My dear boy! I'm more delighted to see you than I can tell you!" exclaimed Dr. Wakefield, who came down to the library at once. He shook the sculptor's hand vigorously, but to Allwin's already nervous apprehension there seemed something uneasy beneath the warmth of his greeting.

"No more delighted than I am to be here," replied Allwin, looking vaguely about the room. All was as it had used to be, only the doctor's face had aged and grown wrinkled.

"Miss Alice is well, I hope?" he added.

"We've followed your success from here, of course."

"You are very kind. It wasn't very much success. I hope Miss Alice is well?"

The doctor hesitated, regarding Allwin with a look that seemed to be of pain, and perhaps pity.

"Yes, she is well — only her eyes."

"Her eyes? She isn't—"

"Oh, no, not blind. At least, not permanently. But at present she is obliged to stay in a darkened room."

"But you wrote me nothing about it. What was the matter?"

"It was an accident in the laboratory. Some acid fumes injured her eyes. It was almost six months ago. She wouldn't let me tell you, for she hoped to be recovered before you came back, but progress has been slower than we expected. She may have to stay in the dark for several months; it is the only chance of a cure."

There was something hopeless in the doctor's tone that made Allwin suspect that the chance of a cure was slight. He gazed at her father, stupified with the shock, and unable to form his lips to any words of sorrow or sympathy.

"She knows that you are expected back to-day. She wished me to tell you that she — that you, in short that you are free." went on the doctor, stumbling over his message.

"Free? How?"

"Why, that you are released from your engagement."

"But I don't want to be released!" cried Allwin, collecting himself. "Good Heavens, what must she think of me! Doesn't she know that I wouldn't give her up if she were ten times blind?"

"I don't know," said the old doctor, indecisively. "It's a difficult matter. I wouldn't venture to advise either of you. But if you really take that view of it, I won't deny that it's a great relief to me. She is much attached to you, very much attached, I may say, and a nervous shock just now, you know, might —"

"How could either of you doubt what view I would take? Can I see her?"

"Well, you can talk to her. She is in a perfectly dark room, you know. I'll go up and tell her that you are here."

Left alone, Allwin suddenly realized that Alice's image had grown faint and distant. Did he love her still, or was it only the clinging perfume of past love that he retained, a perfume often sweeter than love itself? She was still his dearest friend; —he was afraid to question himself more closely.

Dr. Wakefield led him upstairs, tapped at a door at the end of the hall, opened it immediately and drew aside a black curtain.

"Is that you, Dad? Is Cecil there?" he heard Alice's voice say out of the darkness.

The room was perfectly dark, and Allwin was afraid to move. The door had closed instantly and softly. He heard the rustle of a dress, and then a hand touched his shoulder gropingly.

"Is this you, Cecil?"

He caught the pitiable tremor and terror in it, and his whole heart melted in a passion of pity and tenderness. Alice's head fell on his breast; she clung to him and sobbed. She cried with her whole body, with the total abandonment of women who seldom weep. She shook and trembled so convulsively that Allwin was alarmed. Her father had stolen noiselessly away again.

"There, there, dearie!" he murmured, as if she had been a child. "It's all right now. Here I am, and I love you. Don't

cry so. For God's sake, don't, Alice, or you'll break my heart!"

He tried to stroke her hair, but at the motion she drew away from him. Her sobbing ceased, and there was silence in the dark room.

Remembering her as she had been, brilliant, daring, joyous, her eclipse struck him with horror. So large a part of his own life was made of color and beauty of line and form, that life without light seemed to him the worst of hells. She, too, had rejoiced in the sun like himself, and now darkness was her portion. Allwin was filled with such sympathetic pain that he mistook it for love.

"I'm better now," said Alice. "Don't be afraid; it's all over, and I don't often do this sort of thing, you know. I had been waiting for you so long, and —

"Feel about. You'll stumble over a chair somewhere," she resumed in a different tone. "There. Now tell me about Paris, and what you've been doing."

Allwin was so relieved at the firmness of her voice that he began hastily to talk, rapidly, at random, anyhow, to remove the meeting to a less emotional level. It was like speaking into a telephone, to drop his words into that thick darkness, and at first Alice made few replies. He wondered nervously what she was doing behind that veil of night; but by degrees she began to take more part in the conversation, evidently with a forced control at first, then with apparently genuine enjoyment.

The memory of their long hours of intimate talk and speculation had been the thing that Allwin had kept with most pleasure, and he found that Alice's charm had not waned. Her companionship was as delightful as ever, and he was amazed to discover that, in spite of her eyes, she was familiar with the newest currents of ideas, with all the events of the world of art and letters.

"Oh, Dad reads to me," she said in reply to his question. "I have a hired reader sometimes, too. We take three or four foreign periodicals, as usual. Then we sent for all the photographs of the last Salon that we could get, of course. I couldn't see them when they came, but Dad described them to me. I feel as if I had really seen your statue. Where did they place it?"

"Near the main stairway," he told her; and his own words evoked a vision of the vast, glass-roofed court, tented with the lofty gray curtains and giant cords and tassels; the soft light, the gravelled ground, and the swarming black figures among the tall white shapes of marble. It was the field of his first victory and there was no spot so sacred.

"They gave it a good place," he said, with a sigh of recollection. "It was sold there, you know. You'll have to go to France to see it."

He checked himself, afraid that he had hurt her. "We'll go together, you know, dear, as soon as your eyes are better."

"I'll never see it — never!" came out of the darkness, with such certainty and despair that it struck him speechless.

"I'll never see Paris again. I'll never see the golden bridge and the palace with the bronze horses on the roof — oh, I know how it looks as well as you do! Cecil" — after a moment of palpitating silence, "do you still love me?"

"Yes, Alice, I truly do," and he meant it.

"No," she returned, with a quiet sadness, "you do not. It is impossible. I feel — I know that I will never be able to see again. At the best, I will have to stay in this darkness for months, perhaps — who knows how long? How can you love a voice in the darkness, or how could you love a woman whom you could never see?"

She was stating the case as Allwin had feared to state it to himself, and his whole being turned in a panic to contradict it.

"I can see your face now — I know it so well," he said. "Whether I can see it or not, it will always be the most precious and the most beautiful face on earth to me, and your love is everything on earth to me, and the voice in the darkness, when it is your voice, will be the only voice that I shall care to hear."

Alice came over to him so softly that he did not know it, till she kissed his forehead.

"God bless you, Cecil! Your heart is full of nobleness, and I think you have saved my life. I'm not ashamed now to tell you how much you are to me. I have no pride left. I'm nothing now but a wretched blind woman, but if I could help you ever so little, if I could be something in your life, I'd be the proudest

woman alive. Do you think I can? I've had them read to me for the last three months; I've tired them all out, so that when you came back I'd be able still to talk to you about the things you cared for — so that you wouldn't find me a wearisome invalid. My mind is as good as ever, and I care as much as ever for the things I can't see. And the best of our love was never love, after all; it was the friendship, and the comradeship, and the sympathy, wasn't it? We can always have that."

"You will always have my whole heart's affection," said Allwin, gently. "And my friendship and trust too. Call it what you like, we will have all that is best in life."

. . . . . .

They were married three weeks later, in that darkened room. The faintest twilight was admitted for the ceremony, and Alice was so heavily veiled that not a line of her face could be seen. From that day Allwin lived in the great Wakefield house.

He took possession of the immense stable, now almost unused, and remodeled it, refitted it, and turned it into a studio, and a wagon load of modeling clay arrived from Philadelphia. After much thought and consultation with Alice, he decided to do his work for the present at home, bringing models from the city as he needed them. He had no need to hurry, no need to sell, and he was anxious to make his appearance in America with something notable. Later, he might have a second studio in New York, a show studio, where marble would appear to best advantage, and where he could meet his public.

So began Allwin's strangely doubled existence—days of wrestling with the wet clay, and evenings of long reveries and conversations in the darkened room. And these last seemed so remote from his daylight, so unrelated to the day, that they blended imperceptibly with his own inner life, and Alice seemed his spiritual mistress and the counselor of his unuttered hopes and dreams.

She seemed to be always waiting for him when he tapped at the darkened door, and though, as she had said, she was only a voice in the darkness, it was a voice always full of sweetness and wisdom. Allwin consulted her upon all his plans; he knew already the value of her intuition. He described his work to

her; they shared his successes and difficulties, and, the mystical darkness rendering confidence easier, they talked long over those old problems of life and art that are too stale for discussion and too insoluble and vital to be forgotten. Allwin had never known the pleasure of opening his heart to such certain sympathy and understanding, and these evenings with Alice became almost at once the thing to which he looked forward during the day. He hardly knew whether it was a relief that she never spoke of love to him; it was all the frankest comradeship, and it was only by glimpses that he divined the presence of a love as strong as it was silent.

What did she do when he was not with her? What memories, what sombre meditations must fill her darkness! Allwin's own life was so wholly made up of the beauty or ugliness of visible things that he could hardly conceive of life without them, and he waited, though with a darkly diminishing hope, for the end of her imprisonment.

The end was still out of sight. Once a month a doctor came up from Philadelphia, spent an hour in the dark room, and afterwards held a long consultation with Dr. Wakefield. The verdict, as Allwin received it afterwards, was always the same. There was some hope still, but she must remain indefinitely in the darkness.

At first Allwin tried to endure this strange married life as unavoidable, but by degrees it finally came to seem almost natural to him. All his days were occupied with other things, and all his forces were concentrated in the studio, where a heap of clay was slowly taking graceful form. But his mind was with Alice, even while he worked with an intensity that he had never felt before. He was working for her applause; he owed to her all that he had, and he wanted to make her the only return that was in his power.

He had reason to remember his debt during all that year, while he worked at high pressure with intervals of absolute rest. The assured peace, the freedom from all material anxieties gave him a command over himself and over his materials that he had never had before. Added to his severe Paris training, these advantages produced results of finished work that pleased even

him. He told himself that success was in his hand, and he rejoiced with Alice over the certainty of it.

Next winter his marble Hyperion had an exhibition by itself in New York, and it was sold for a price which Allwin would have considered fabulous a few years earlier. But he did not consider it fabulous now, nor as any more than the statue was worth. He had grown already accustomed to money, since he no longer needed it, and when he deposited his check he sent Alice a hundred dollars' worth of roses from town, for she still loved flowers as passionately as if she could see them.

It was on her account that he would not move his working studio to New York, as all his friends advised him to do in the next year. Alice could not well go with him, and he would not desert her so long as she cared for his society. Moreover, he did not like to think what his loneliness would be without her, he had drawn so much of his inspiration from her mind for the last two years.

They had been married for two years, and darkness had been her portion all that time. The doctor's visits had grown rarer, and finally ceased. Alice never would speak of her eyes, and her father replied vaguely to Allwin's questions. Allwin believed that hope had been given up, that it would be better to bring Alice out to enjoy what she could of the sun and the world, but her father seemed to cling still to the ghost of a hope that was dead.

It was so dead for Allwin that, with human selfishness, he had come to find the abnormal state of things quite natural. It had grown so familiar that, without a thought of strangeness, he opened her door and went unerringly to the easy-chair that he knew how to find now in the dark. And the darkness held an invisible, but wise and witty woman, whose whole thoughts were centered upon him, who was always ready with pleasant talk and laughter for his good days, and the tenderest sympathy for his bad ones. Allwin felt something of the occult pleasure of the seraglio in those two years; that dark room was a sort of spiritual zenana, with its voice that no man seemed to hear but himself, and its mysterious face that no man ever saw.

It was so long since he had seen it himself that he came to for-

get, in spite of old photographs, how Alice looked. He knew that she must have changed greatly, and he unconsciously sketched a likeness of her for his imagination, a sort of composite portrait, made up of the girl he had seen, and the woman he knew she must be, and mixed with it the pure grace of the shapes he worked upon daily. The face of his dreams was pale, clear-cut, worn with pain and confinement and full of a divine sadness, and he fancied that the eyes must have the unseeing and clairvoyant gaze of a noble statue.

It would have been impossible for Allwin to have imagined her otherwise. He attributed beauty to her as he attributed goodness, for by every instinct and by all his training he shrank uncontrollably from deformity as he did from evil.

In November of that year he went to New York, and returned two days sooner than he had intended. It was midnight when he reached home — he was not expected — and the house was locked and dark. He let himself in very quietly, and stole up the stairs, and at the end of the hall he perceived a thread of light under Alice's door. It startled him as a ghost would have done.

There was an electric light in the room, used by the servants while Alice retired to her bedroom beyond, and Allwin suspected that some one had left it carelessly turned on. He opened the door softly and went in to put it out.

Under the light was a great arm-chair turned from him, and he did not notice that there was a woman in it till he was near enough to touch her. Then he shrank back with a gasp of disgust and anger. It was a woman he did not know, hideously repulsive in face as a leper. The creature jumped up, dropping the book she had been reading, and tried to dart past him, but he caught her by the arm.

Then he heard Alice's voice crying as if in agony, "Let me go! Put out the light! Oh, please put out the light!" It took him several seconds to realize that the voice came from the woman he was holding.

"What devilish thing is this?" he heard himself saying blankly over and over. He stared with increasing loathing at the horrible face, the blotched and puffed purple of the skin, like

some poisonous fungus — but out of the wreck two gray eyes looked at him, and they were Alice's eyes, and it was Alice's voice.

He dropped the woman's arm and put out the light. He heard her drop back into the chair, and then he recognized Alice's dry, convulsive sobbing.

At that sound, at the familiar darkness of the room, the old protecting pity and tenderness came back to him, and again habit showed him the pale and noble face that his imagination had built from illusions. It was only for an instant, and he knew that he would never see that face again in his fancy. It had been blotted out by the hideous mask that he still seemed to see.

The sound of sobbing finally ceased. Allwin was afraid to speak. His blood chilled with a vague, unspeakable dread. Then the light flashed on again blindingly.

After one involuntary glance Allwin averted his head.

"No, you must look at me now," said Alice. "There can be no more concealment and no more darkness. It has come — oh, I knew it would come — but I tried so hard to keep it back!"

She struggled again with her tears, almost hysterically choking, but pity seemed to be frozen now in Allwin's heart. He would not look at her,— he could not have remained in the room if he had looked at her.

"I don't — I don't quite understand," he forced himself to say, calmly: "Tell me. You are not blind, then."

"My eyes are as good as they ever were. They were the only part of my face that escaped, I think. I was wearing glass goggles to protect them from the fumes of the hydrofluoric acid, when something burst and spattered. I thought I should die. When I saw myself next in a mirror I wished I had died. Then I thought that you — might never know."

"But the oculist from Philadelphia?" Allwin stammered, trying to comprehend all the deception that he began to realize had been practised upon him.

"It was only a physician. He treated me. He was an old friend."

"But couldn't you have told me?" Allwin cried, bitterly.

"I should have been told. Couldn't you have trusted me?"

"Not to shrink from me? No, I knew your nature too well. You would never have married me if you had known."

Allwin knew that this was true. It was the greater reason why he should have known. There was silence for several minutes. Allwin felt that all words were futilities in the face of the situation.

"I know that we should have told you," Alice went on, in a softer and hopeless voice. "Father insisted on telling you, but I would not have it. I made him promise to help me to deceive you. Otherwise, I knew what would be the result. And, Cecil, I could not give you up. You meant more than happiness to me; you were my whole life, my own being, the most vital part of myself. It was in mere desperate self-defense that I lied to you. And I thought that I could make up to you for it. I could help you; I could be the mate of your inner life—your best life. I thought that I could help you and comfort you and encourage you as I sat here in the dark, and I have tried to do it. You know best whether I have succeeded, but do you know that these two years have been full of more happiness than I ever dreamed I could have? They would have been perfect but that I felt that they were founded on a lie. I felt that they could not last. Every day I trembled for what might come, and I hugged every day gained as something that could not be taken from me.

"I was ready to spend my whole life in this dark room," she added, after another tremulous silence. "I hoped for nothing better. I read here and studied, night after night when the house was still, so that you would always find me a companion who understood. You were my world. Sitting here in the darkness I have lived in your life more intensely than yourself."

After another silence: "This trouble made me cling the more to you, you see. I knew that you had loved me, and I hoped that you might go on loving me, or let me love you, at least, and never know."

Allwin groaned inarticulately to himself, stunned and ashamed. He was stupified at this revelation of the undreamed-of capacity of Alice's love, ashamed that it left him cold, and silent because he could not bring himself to give her the only

comfort she needed. He glanced aside at her again, trembled, but at last forced himself to say:

"There won't be any difference. I shall always love you."

The words sounded grotesquely false and hollow to him, but Alice looked up quickly, palpitating.

"Do you mean that? It's more than I expect — it's more than I ask. But if you do mean it, you are the noblest man that ever lived!" she said, with a kind of wonder.

"I mean it, of course —" Allwin began, but she broke in.

"Think well whether you do mean it. I know your nature — how you hate the ugly. You wouldn't be the artist you are if you didn't. Can you bear to see me every day, and forget how I look? You must decide that, and I won't blame you if —"

"My God — yes — let me go, Alice!" Allwin exclaimed. He felt that he could endure no more of this. He was sick, and quivered to his finger-ends. "All this has — has upset me, you see. We'll arrange things on a better basis to-morrow. It will be all right. Good-bye!"

He hurried out, full of a nervous terror that she might kiss him. Down the stairs and out to his own studio he ran, shaking with such nervous tremors that he almost screamed when a studio drapery flapped his face in the dark. Then the electric light shone out, and he saw around him the white shapes of his own creation — marbles, casts, sketches — in the pure beauty of a world far removed from humanity and its sordid wreckage.

Allwin dropped into a long chair, shut his eyes, and instantly opened them again. It seemed to him that darkness would always be full of shapes of horror.

His duty was clear. He would have to conquer his horror, or act as if he had conquered it, and show himself capable of self-sacrifice in his turn. A far less devotion than she had given him would call for that recompense.

He would do it, he said to himself, trying to blind himself with resolves. He would meet her as usual, only in the full light; he would wear a mask on his face and a bridle on his tongue. And he knew that if the mask fell ever for an instant it would be worse than if he had never attempted to carry out the projected deception.

He lay down on a couch in the studio, intending to spend the night there. He closed his eyes resolutely, and the whole horror of that scene in her room sprang out in fire on his eyelids. He forced himself to regard it, to look the horror in the face, and he fought his battle there, and he felt himself forced back towards the bitter reality and the impossibility of saving the situation by any fictitious resolution.

The thought of death, of suicide, came to him temptingly as the easiest relief. He considered it, and dismissed it. The problem could be solved by no such crude method, and he could not be such a coward as to slip from the tangle, leaving Alice to bear the burden of her own fate and his self-murder.

But to go on living with her was impossible beyond any self-deception. Sooner or later the lying situation would break down. No peace could grow out of lives saturated with falsehood, and the final catastrophe would be worse than the first.

All his instincts, all his training, fought against him; all the benefits and all the love that she had poured upon him became weights to sink him deeper in dishonor. He felt that he would gladly give up his opening career and all his art in exchange for the strength or the callousness to look Alice in the face and disregard her change, and he knew that he could not do it.

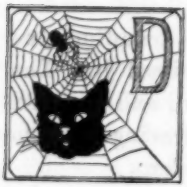
There was only one necessity — that he should never see her again. He did not attempt to defend himself in his action. It was dishonorable, perhaps, but it was inevitable.

There was an early train for New York, and he preferred to wait for it at the station. He did not attempt to imagine what he would do when he reached the city. He vaguely foresaw a life of wretched wandering and failure. It would be his just reward, perhaps, and yet he had a rankling sense of injustice.

He stole out into the darkness, and crossed the lawn to the street, making for the station. He felt that by some juggle he had become unwillingly the lowest of created things.

The Kid's Game.*

BY WHITNEY PAYNE.



EW DROP INN, Tim Hudson's place in northern Michigan, was the retreat unique. Each fall, after the close of the racing season, the same crowd of immaculate, cold-eyed bookmakers, flashy bejeweled owners, and certain of the more prosperous followers, with here and there a portly, genial saloon keeper from the racing towns, came up to take Tim's cure as an antidote for the rigors of the past season at Latonia and a bracer for the coming winter campaign at Oakland or New Orleans. By day they sat on Tim's cool, deep porch overlooking the lake and talked horse to the tune of tinkling ice and sizzing syphons. At night the bachelors and certain of the others who could escape the "Missus" sat tense and quiet until dawn over no-limit games.

Tim and the first arrival of the season, a young stranger bringing the necessary credentials for admittance to Tim's, were sitting on the veranda. The young man looked up from the paper he was reading. "Well, I see they've landed a couple more of these con men down in Cinncy — pretty slick pair from what it says here. Don't look like crooks, either, do they?" he asked, handing the paper to Tim.

Tim took the paper and glanced idly at the pictures of the two crooks — one a young man of likable looks, the other, somewhat older, looked like a prosperous "meet them as they come" drummer.

"Yes," Tim answered, "I sees this write-up this mornin'; it took a heap of a load off my mind, too. I got right chummy with these guys once."

The young man looked up, about to ask a question, when Tim exploded angrily:

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"It certainly makes me peevish when some gay little bee passes me his stinger an' then buzzes off without putting me Jerry as to how he done it."

"Did these fellows get to you?" the young man asked humbly.

"*Did they?* They got to me and stayed some time before they left, and I never knew how they put it over on me till I reads this big spiel about 'em."

"They must be pretty slippery," the young man ventured.

"You're right they're slippery, an' I know several guys who'd like to slide on 'em — but I'll tell you about it; it's too good to keep."

His cigar lit to his satisfaction, Tim began:

"Y' see, I makes it a rule to let no strangers in, just the same old bunch, so when any new guy blows in I hangs out the HSO sign for him unless he's a friend of the bunch. Well, last fall a young fellow, this bloke," pointing to the younger of the two men in the picture, "drops off the 'bus one day after the gang's all here. Nobody waves the 'Welcome to Our City' banner at him, so I dopes him out for a ringer and passes him the not-a-bed-left line of bunk. Well, sir, he shows me a letter from Andy Andrews — you know Andy, best old top in the game — introducin' him. Andy bein' a friend of our'n I thaws out an' makes the kid welcome. The bunch took a shine to him from the flag, an' the dames — on the level, he had 'em all on his list before night — it makes a hit with the spliced boys, 'cause their wives didn't have time to nag 'em, they was so busy pettin' Jimmie; Jimmie Tagney — that's the label he worked under. Well, after a couple o' days, Jimmie comes up to me with a innocent 'Papa, give me a penny' look an' says he hears there's a game goin' on, an' can he sit in? It happens that Spike Denton's wife goes nuttier 'n usual about then an' keeps Spike out every evenin' rowin' around the lake with a dinky lantern tryin' to break the law an' spear that overweight pickerel somebody almost caught in '61, so we lets the kid sit in our game to fill out. On the square, I felt sorry for the sucker. He plays a fair hand — tells us that he was the rah, rah little poker player in college — but you've got to play more'n a fair hand if you keep your pants with that crew — all on th' level, you know, but they played th' game before the kid learned

th' grand game of Ol' Maid — an' then his luck was putrid, never helped his hand. Well, sir, he played five nights and was about 5,000 crispos to the worse. I has a talk with him then — tells him to stick to the penny-ante game an' the ladies, but he says nix; says he has a hunch that he's due for a killin'. I argues and bullies him, but he finally pulls out a roll about the size of a good healthy cannon and says, 'What the hell, Tim, can't a man spend his money the way he wants to?' — a regular nursery sport's line of bunk, if I ever heard one — Oh, he was a slick one; he had all of us thinkin' that it was a shame to take his gold, but seein' as he was tryin' so hard to divorce that roll, we figures we might as well cut the melon as anybody. Well, sir, that very night the slaughter of us wise guys began to start. The kid shows th' same bum form for the first hour or so, and then something dropped — th' melon was green and sour and wouldn't cut — from then on till mornin' he was so far ahead that we got tired of tryin' to figure out how much we was payin' per minute to keep him amused.

"Lookin' back now, it seems to me that that last pot ought to have set me thinkin', but he had the wool so tight over my eyes that I couldn't see nothin' but the three chorus girls in my hand on which, by th' way, I dropped more than many a Pittsburg stogie does on the real goods. To git to th' point: We was playin' jackpots, ten bones to come in an' ten to open, an' the limit was about ten feet over the roof. I wish you could have seen that pot! Bill Wilson opens for ten an' the kid — I somehow always call him the kid — hikes the opener ten, everybody trailin' in. Bill was dealin' and the kid, sittin' on his left, was the first to draw cards. Bill picks up the deck an' asks the kid how many. 'One,' says he. Just as Bill starts to hand him the card he fumbles the deck an' they falls all over the table an' floor. Well, Bill picks 'em up, shuffles 'em a few, an' as he starts to pass the kid the single paper he called for, the kid pipes up, 'Changed my mind, Bill, slip me the top three.' None of us took no notice of it. I thinks to myself he's decided to draw to a pair instead of his four-flush or bobtail. Well, I won't try to tell you how the bettin' went, but all of us was froze out but Bill an' the kid, each havin' drawn to a pair. Finally, Bill throws in his last chip —

a blue one that's worth twenty-five long green. 'There's twenty-five,' he says; 'I'm twenty-five shy on a call of your fifty raise.' 'I got two pair of fives,' says the kid. Well, Bill's a good loser an' he smiles when he lays down one spots full on kinks, but the smile hurt just the same. The kid raked in the pot an' cashed in $8,000 in chips beside the pile of greenbacks in front of him that looks like a St. Pat. day parade. As we breaks up the kid says, 'Well, things is lookin' alive, eh?' an' he laughs that cold, unpleasant laugh that you never forget if you hear it once. I used to hear it lots when I was dealin' stud on the Mississippi, but I never heard no college boy let one loose before — it's a dyed-in-the-wool gambler's laugh, an' it set more'n one of us thinkin'.

"Next morning, or rather afternoon, the kid was rowin' some of the dames out after pond lilies, so when Bill Wilson comes out on the porch where the rest of us was nursin' some man's-sized grouches, things was clear for a post-mortem on last night's game.

"'Boys,' says Bill, 'I ain't whinin' nor I ain't got no proof for the line of thought my busy little brain has been handin' me since last night's game, but either that kid's a damn fool or a crook. Y' know he changed his mind on that last pot an' drew three papers — he drew to a pair of fives an' broke a four-flush or a bob-tail to do it. Now, I contends that a guy is either a nut, or has got the deck dope, if he breaks either one to draw to a pair of phoebes — ain't that right? An' then did you pipe the laugh he hands us as he stuffs the swag in his jeans?'

"'Now, look here, Bill,' I says, 'that sounds like the right dope, but I guess the kid's just a lucky mut, 'cause I don't see how he could be a crook; you know,' I warms up, feelin' that the kid was bein' misjudged, 'you an' me an' the rest of the all-night gang here is too old hands to fall for any cold decks or palmed cards, or any of them crusties, so all the chance a sharper would have with us is marked cards, an' you know, Bill, that I buys a supply of cards every year before the gang comes up, an' that we use new decks with the seals whole every night, an', besides, I keeps them cards locked up in the safe, so how could the kid mark 'em? No, Bill, I guess that he's just a plain damn fool, but nix on the crook talk.'

"Well, do you know, sir, that my line of talk convinces Bill, so that he begs my pardon for his suspicious line of bunk. There ain't much more to it. The kid stays a week longer an' plays every night, losin' a big pile now an' then, but always winnin' it back with a few thousand per cent. interest. After he goes we hold an informal caucus an' nominates ourselves to the penny-ante class for the rest of the season. We figures that the kid got to us for about $35,000, which we agrees is rank extravagance for one week's amusement which didn't amuse."

Tim stopped, arose slowly and, walking to the edge of the porch, threw his cigar stub away.

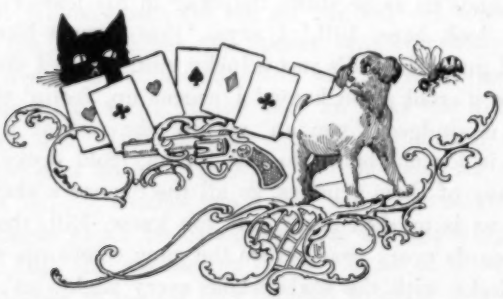
"Well," the young man asked eagerly, "you said the article in to-day's paper cleared it up. What's the answer? — I give up."

Tim walked back to his chair, picked the newspaper up and, holding it up before the young man, pointed one pudgy finger at the picture.

"The young guy here is the kid; his pal, this older-lookin' bloke, is the phoney drummer who sold me last year's supply of cards."

"You mean that the old boy sold you marked cards and the young one, the kid, followed him and ——"

"You're a good guesser, young fellow," Tim replied, and then, lighting another cigar, asked, "What'll you drink — to the kid?"



The Dragon's Fang.*

BY J. CLARKSON MILLER.

HAVE several reasons for confiding to paper the account of an experience with which, I believe, no other man in this day and age has met. In the first place, I realize that I am a marked man — that at any moment the end may come — and that unless I myself tell the tale no one will ever know the real cause of my death. Then, too, I can think of nothing else — the scenes of this terrible drama are being constantly re-enacted before me, so that the writing down of an account of the original performance seems to lift, to some extent, the great weight from my mind. And in the third place, I believe it will make an interesting story to any one who may come to read it, in spite of my poor ability in the telling. I am, of course, more accustomed to repeating the words of some one else than to writing my own lines — still I believe that the inherent interest of my story will overcome the defects in the telling of it.

With this prologue, or apology, whichever you may choose to call it, let me tell my story as simply as possible. I do not ask the reader to accept it, although every word is as true as truth; I only ask that I at least be given the credit of believing it myself and of having no intention to deceive.

First, let me introduce myself: I am Trevor Morlaine, an actor, and like most of my profession am possessed of a very erratic temperament, which has caused me many minutes of the most intense mental suffering. Since childhood I have been subject to attacks of what is commonly known as "the blues," during which I suffer all the tortures of a lost soul. I am fully aware of my eccentric nature — no one more so than I myself — and I have tried to overcome it, but in vain!

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Moreover, for the past few years I have been strongly addicted to the use of opium and cocaine, consuming large quantities of these drugs. How I acquired this habit is of no consequence here — suffice it to say that I have been subject to it for some time — I offer no apology because of it.

Some time after beginning the habitual use of opium, which followed the acquisition of the cocaine habit, I became possessed of a peculiar hobby in the shape of a mania for things Chinese. I haunted curio shops and bazaars, buying enormous quantities of Chinese wares, pottery, brasswork and the like. I spent hours poring over books of Chinese history, legends and customs — I even began the study of the Chinese language, under the tutorship of the proprietor of my favorite opium parlor. I can offer no explanation for this strange mania. It came upon me suddenly, like an attack of fever, and feverishly I followed its dictates. Indeed, I became so engrossed in my studies and researches that I almost forgot my craving for drugs, entirely losing my desire for cocaine and consuming only a small quantity of opium.

During all this time I was rehearsing my new play, a four-act drama called "The Net." In the company selected to support me in this piece was a very beautiful young lady, Miss Shiela Carden, who was cast for the ingénue rôle. Strangely enough, I soon became very much infatuated with Miss Carden, who in her sweet, childish manner had from the first confided to me her hopes, her ambitions and her heart-aches. Realizing my utter unworthiness of her, I am proud to say that I kept my passion locked within my heart. I treated her as a parent might treat a child, for she was truly a child in innocence — and almost one in years.

We began our season late, the first performance being put on in early October. The piece proved to be very successful, both critics and public were kind, and we played nightly to crowded houses. In spite of the fact that it was her first appearance on the professional stage, Shiela at once bounded into popularity. Her beauty, winsomeness and naïveté, brought her audiences to her feet, and the name of Shiela Carden appeared far oftener in the newspaper accounts of the play than that of Trevor Morlaine, in spite of the fact that I was, theoretically at least, the star. I,

however, far from feeling professional jealousy, rejoiced in her success; — I was prouder of it than I had ever been of my own.

After the piece had settled down for its all-winter run, I became more and more engrossed in my pursuit of things Chinese. I even neglected Shiela, for several weeks seeing her only at performances. In the meantime an event, seemingly harmless enough, took place, which is the cause of this chronicle. A well known millionaire clubman, whom I shall call Herbert Hammond, came, saw and was conquered. That is to say he came to a performance of "The Net," and fell deeply in love with Shiela. He contrived to meet her through mutual friends and immediately became a constant worshipper at her shrine. All this took place before I became aware that Hammond, whom I knew slightly, had even met Shiela.

When I found that out I was both glad and sorry — glad because I knew Hammond to be a fine young fellow, a man in the fullest sense of the word, and sorry because I was afraid of losing Shiela. Not that I had the slightest intention of offering myself to her, but I knew that her marriage with Hammond would take her into a world different from mine.

Several days after I became aware of the situation, I was sitting in my dressing-room smoking a cigarette and waiting for my entrance cue in the first act. I had come to the theatre early that evening; there still remained several minutes before orchestra call, when a light knock sounded at my door.

"Come in," I called. The door opened and Shiela's pretty face was thrust in. I can close my eyes now and see her as she appeared at that moment. Dainty, petite, she did not look the eighteen years she owned. Her pretty, childish face flushed, her great brown eyes were as smiling, as were her full red lips, and her glorious hair, coiled and twisted, gleamed like polished bronze in the dim light.

She came in and threw her slender figure into a chair facing mine. I looked at her closely and thought of Hammond. What a stunning couple they would make! She with her childish womanliness, winsome manner and fresh beauty; he with his noble manhood. And yet I hated to think of it because —

Shiela was speaking.

"Dear old Trek," she said, calling me by the name she had invented for me, "I came to tell you something before any one else knows of it. Listen, Trek," and her eyes brightened, "I am engaged!" She looked at me expectantly, happiness beaming in her face. I said nothing for a moment — could say nothing.

Finally, "It's Hammond?" I asked.

"Yes," and then when I said nothing further, "but you don't seem a bit glad or surprised or anything. I thought you would be glad with me, Trek. Aren't you pleased?"

"Yes, of course," I managed to say, "of course I am, little girl, but you completely took me off my feet by your sudden way of breaking the news to me."

She laughed.

"You are very happy, aren't you?" I asked myself rather than her. She nodded and I reached and took her little gloved hand.

"Then let me congratulate both of you," I said, "for I can't see how either of you could have done better. I hope I may see Hammond tonight and congratulate him personally. You will leave the company at once?"

"No," she said, "Bert has been called south on business and I am going to stay with the play until he comes back. Mr. Delft will have a girl here to watch me in the part so that I can leave as soon as he returns. I must let her have a chance to learn the lines at least. And besides," here she sighed ever so slightly, "I don't want to break off here so quickly. Everybody has been so nice to me here, the manager, the people, the audiences and everybody. I've learned to love the place — why I even know 'props' and every 'grip' by name. And you, Trek, you have been so good to me. I don't know what I am going to do without my 'big brother.'"

"But I may come and see you sometimes?"

"Of course. Any and all times — but it won't be the same. Do you remember," she asked, "do you remember during rehearsals how you comforted me when I thought I was doing everything wrong; how you taught me little tricks of the trade, how to laugh and cry, how to look frightened or happy or sad; even how to put on my make-up?"

Did I remember? *Don't* I remember yet? If I should live a

million years every word that passed between us would be remembered to the end.

"Of course," I said; "but with a less apt pupil ——"

"No flattery," she laughed; "leave that to lovers. But I must hurry — orchestra's called."

"Shiela," I had to watch my voice to keep it from trembling, "you will lunch with me to-night?"

"Surely." She rose to go, but stopped. "I have something to show you that will interest you — something very, very wonderful," she added, and, with a bright little nod, was gone.

After the performance Shiela and I went to a little Chinese restaurant, a favorite haunt of theatrical folk, and seated ourselves in a little curtained booth. It was a wonderful place — this of Ching Chu's — Oriental, ancient and mysterious. Our booth was walled in by hangings of the richest purple Chinese silk, embroidered with dragons and serpents and strange birds and beasts of outlandish shapes and colors. The tables were of bamboo, the service of delicate silver and hammered brass, with tiny dishes and cups of the rarest and most exquisitely painted china. Above our heads hung a brazier in which a delicate incense smoked, filling the room with a pungent perfume. Great paper lanterns flooded the booth with soft colored light.

I tapped on a little muffled gong that stood on the table and almost instantly Wu, the head-waiter, appeared, clad in glistening silk and satin. I gave him our order and as he slipped noiselessly out I turned to look at Shiela. How beautiful she was in the soft light of the swinging lanterns! Never before had her great eyes beamed with such velvety softness — never before had her delicately tinted face glowed with such a spiritual light. I felt the hot blood leap in my veins, I became almost mad with the desire to crush her in my arms, a dizziness blinded me and the blue smoke of the incense burned in my nostrils.

She was speaking.

"I told you I had something to show you, Trek," she was saying, "and this is just the place to show it. It goes so well with the setting," and as she spoke she drew from her waist a small, flat box of morocco leather and handed it to me.

"Open it," she said.

I took the box, looked at it, and pressed the catch. The box flew open. The sight of its contents almost stopped my breath. There, lying in the black velvet lining, was the most wonderful pearl I had ever seen. It was almost as big as a pigeon's egg, dazzlingly white on its black background, yet sparkling with an opalescent glow I have never before or since known a pearl to possess. It was shaped like the canine tooth of some great beast, broad at the base and tapering to a blunt point in a regular curve. I stared at it in speechless wonder.

"What do you think of it?" asked Shiela.

"It is wonderful," I gasped, "wonderful."

For some time we both sat in silence, eyes fixed on the radiant jewel. The pungent odor of the burning incense seemed to grow stronger and stronger, the dull light seemed to grow more and more soft and weird. My nerves became gradually strung tighter and tighter until it seemed that something must give way under the tension.

When I finally raised my eyes I looked squarely into those of Wu, the waiter, which were staring like two great black beads, opened so wide as to almost overcome the Mongolian slant. His thick lips were parted, his yellow face was pale so that it looked like the dead yellow-white of a cat-fish's belly, and his yellow forehead was wrinkled like an old parchment. When my eyes met his, his expression changed, or rather vanished, as his face re-assumed the expressionless calm of the Oriental. He came to the table, set down his steaming tray and silently glided between the curtains.

In spite of the fact that I myself had expressed as great astonishment, the expression on the Chinaman's face as he had gazed upon the great pearl worried me. I looked at Shiela. She was looking at the brazier above our heads, nervously tapping the paper-like edge of her saucer with a white forefinger.

"Where did you get this?" I asked.

"Bert gave it to me this afternoon," she replied. "He said he bought it of an old Chinaman who seemed anxious to get rid of it. The old fellow hinted that it was sacred to some horrible god in his own country, Bert said. Somehow it frightens me," she added shivering, "but I cannot keep from looking at it. It

fascinates me like the eyes of a snake. But of course I am foolish. It can't be anything but a mere pearl — a very peculiar one, of course, but still only a stone. And yet ——" here she hesitated.

"Let me look at it closer," I said, as I took it in my fingers. I examined it carefully. Around the base there seemed to be a series of minute indentations, like scratches, marring the otherwise smooth surface. I took from my waistcoat pocket a powerful lens which I always carried, and held it over the pearl. The scratches formed themselves into characters under the powerful influence of the lens. My studies of the Chinese language enabled me to read:

The great Chung-Li; his breath is fire, his fangs are death. Guard thy throat.

I could feel Shiela's hot breath on my face as she leaned forward to look through the lens.

"Why, there are letters on it," she cried. "Can you read them?"

"No," I lied, "I cannot read them." I restored the lens to my pocket, the pearl to its case. The curtains parted and Wu stole in.

"Pardon, sir," he said in his excellent English, "but I have brought fresh tea." He set down the little brass pot on the table and left. I poured for Shiela and myself, lit a cigarette and sat there looking at her. The delicate aroma of the cigarette blended with pungent smoke of incense as we sipped the steaming tea. Neither of us spoke. Shiela's face reflected the look of nervous tension I knew my own must be wearing. A brass gong struck softly somewhere in the place and the incense from the brazier floated down to our nostrils, borne on some unseen current of heavy air.

By the intense quiet which prevailed I knew that we must be the only patrons left in the place. The light grew dimmer and dimmer and the smell of the incense more and more powerful. I felt a strange, inexplicable terror creeping over me, coupled with a feeling of weakness in every muscle of my body. My eyes became heavy, my throat contracted, my head began to roar like the beating of a million waves upon the sands. I tried to shout for Wu, but no sound came. I heard the thud of a fall, and by

a great effort I opened my eyes and saw that Shiela had fallen from her chair. I tried to rise, but could not, my eyes grew heavier and heavier, the choking sensation became stronger and stronger until I felt myself falling, falling, and heard a great crash. Then I knew no more.

When I came to my senses I looked about for Shiela. She was gone. There on the floor lay her hat and jacket in a heap; nearby was the morocco case that had held the pearl — the jewel itself was gone.

I rose to my feet and staggered through the curtains into the open room of the restaurant. Everything was as still as death, no one was near. At the back of the long hall-like room I saw a little door, and in front of it on the floor lay one of Shiela's gloves. I rushed down the hall, through the curtained door into a closet-like enclosure lined with tufted silk and lighted by a glowing red paper lantern. There, upon a silken couch, was something covered with a counterpane of purple satin on which was embroidered, in green and red, a great dragon, with only one tooth, which glowed like living fire. Beneath this figure were some Chinese characters in black. I read:

The great Chung-Li; his breath is fire, his fangs are death. Guard thy throat.

I tore back the satin sheet. Beneath it, with an expression of the most ghastly terror on her white face, great eyes staring at the ceiling, lay Shiela. The lace about her throat was torn into shreds, and on the delicate flesh was a purple mark, shaped like the tooth of a great beast.

I could feel my hair rise on my head, my flesh crept and I screamed like a woman with the horror of it all. Shrieking like a maniac, I turned and ran until I found myself in the street. I found a police station and with half a dozen officers retraced my steps to the restaurant. It seemed that we would never get there. I urged my escort on until they panted like dogs in August. We crept cautiously up the narrow stairs and into the largest room of the place, but no one was there. The lights were low and dull, some had burned entirely out. We rushed back to the closet in the rear, but Shiela's body was gone. Ching-Chu and Wu have never been located, Shiela's body has never been found,

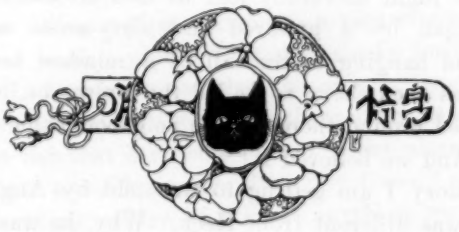
and the great pearl has vanished utterly. A few days ago I received through the mail a note, written in Chinese characters, reading:

The great Chung-Li; his breath is fire, his fangs are death. Guard thy throat.

I know that I am marked. I know that I am to follow Shiela as a sacrifice to the great Chung-Li; and yet I do not fear. In the great beyond there will be no unworthiness, no love unrequited or unsatisfied, no lives wasted. I am waiting calmly for the time when I, like her, shall feel the fire of the dragon's fang.

. . . . . .

Several months ago quite a stir was created by the peculiar death of Trevor Morlaine, a talented actor, in an apartment house in New York. At the morgue it was noticed that his throat bore a peculiar mark, shaped like the tooth of a great beast, and in color a deep purple. His death was ascribed by the coroner to heart-failure caused by the excessive use of drugs, but several weeks later the foregoing manuscript was found among some old papers in his desk.



The Out-Lying of Hector.*

BY ALEX. GARDINER.

HAVE read a lot of stories about lumberjacks around in Maine and Canada and such places, but I've always logged in the big timber, and it's different here — judging from the stories. They are always fighting in those stories. We are not peaceable — being a light-hearted class of people — but we pull off our trouble around the saloons. I've only seen one little or'nary fight in camp, and the outfits I've earned money from are strung from Kalispel to Puget's Sound.

But we certainly had contests in the shack where I bunked at Floyd and Callahan's Camp Four. The shack held twenty bunks, and about half of them harbored average good liars — good liars, but not convincing. They lied only for pastime. But Hector Tretheney, the blacksmith (Uncle Heck, we called him), he was the main liar — he was convincing — you just had to believe him. When he talked, we just sat and watched his beard move, for he was a big, old man, and he had a big beard.

Why! one night he calmly told us how he was chased across Lake Michigan by a hundred and sixty-seven wolves — him a-skating and hanging to the tail of a reindeer he had tamed. The deer was shod sharp so he led the wolves on to some glare ice and skated around there till the neighbors came out and shot them all. And we believed it!

But the story I am getting to was told by Angus Latouche, and Angus was different from Heck. Why, he was the quietest man in the other ten bunks. A little, young man — sociable, but it was like falling a fir with a hand-saw to get him to talk about himself. He had been around too, in the States and in Canada, where he was raised. Then he had been through the

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Boer War with the Canada soldiers. He must have *had* conversation stored up in his system.

I suppose his big story was the rule-proving exception, but you can judge.

It came up this way: Heck's lie reminded some one of fishing through the ice, leading around finally to remarks on the thickness and weight of the rainbow trout in the creek above the falls. Heck said he had caught one only six inches long, but it weighed a pound. He said he remembered the time because coming back over Mule Ridge he was followed by a cougar. It never tackled him, but he saw it thirty-one and a half times, going a mile. Then it quit as it came. Heck said he was pretty scared.

Angus was playing pedro, quiet, with Shorts McGee and some others, but now he looks up. He says, casual like:

"What did you say was the diameter of that fish, Heck?"

"I said it was six inches long," said Heck, and he says it kind of testy.

"Well, by Gawd!" says Angus.

It surprised me to hear him jump the old man about a fish. Angus was great to hunt and had shot all kinds of fur-bearing animals, from polar-bears to Boers — but fish?

Still, I didn't think of a yarn from him. I might have. He gets through his game, then throws down his cigarette and commences filling a pipe. Angus is a cigarette smoker — mostly — and you know a pipe is a handier smoke for a yarn.

Well, Angus lit up, then he says: "By Gawd! that was a big fish for his size, but I was there at the catchin' of the biggest, fattest fish that ever came out of a wet place."

I have to apologize for that "By Gawd" of Angus'. I'd put in something milder, if I knew anything serviceable that would be milder. But he says it unconscious, he don't *mean* any harm by it, and as I couldn't make up a story, I have to tell it the way he did.

He goes on: "Was any of you in Seattle the year of the Chicago World's Fair?"

No one pleads guilty — we were all out from the East since that time—except Ike Borst, and he was a baby that far back,

and of course he was bashful now about not being properly grown up.

"Well, by Gawd, I was!" says Angus, very positive. "I come there in the spring of ninety-one, me and Nels Jorgensen —that was his name, but they called him George. We started pardners up in the Coeur d'Alenes; he was a good Swede.

"We was loggin' Snohomish way, but the camp shut down, so we was out of a job.

"George, he was quite a mechanic; before we could get our money spent he run across a busted-up launch on Lake Washington there. It was cheap and he got me to put up half the money for it.

"Well, I sobered up, and here I was a sea-captain, by Gawd! I was hostile at first, but George tinkered her up, and we done well, takin' out picnic parties and odd haulin's. We batched in a shack at Meydenbauer Bay — got it free for mendin' the roof.

"Of course there was some dull times, and we hunted and trapped. One day we took my Winchester and starts up the lake a ways where we'd heard pheasants drummin', off in the woods.

"She was a kind of a showery mornin' and I set up in the bow considerin' whether may be it was too wet for pheasants to drum, George he was foolin' at his engine. Well, we was close into a brushy point where there's deep water. I seen a mushrat swimmin' for the point, so I grabs the rifle — just for the shot.

"You know how a big trout takes a fly — just comes up easy, and you wouldn't know he was big if you didn't know a little one'd make a splash — like folks. Well, while I was holdin' on that rat, figurin' how much to lead him, the rat disappears — just goes. It was funny.

"I looks, then I looks at George. 'By Gawd!' I says — just like that — 'By Gawd!' It surprised me.

"George says a fish took him.

"'What kind of a fish is in this lake that can down mushrats like a trout with a buffalo-gnat?' that's what I asks George.

"He says it was a fish all right. George didn't have no imagination — he believed what he seen — and by Gawd, he was right!

"I had an idea. I heard squirrels a-squtterin' off in the woods, and I figured what rose to a mushrat would maybe rise to a squirrel.

"There was two, but one of 'em was only wounded — I was too excited to shoot good — it runs all around and bites George's thumb. George scarcely notices — we was both excited — but we kep' it alive so it would swim and look natural.

"We steamed back where the rat disappeared at, and I thrown out my squirrel as far as I could. Sure enough, the fish took it. It bobbed for a minute, till we commenced thinkin' nothing was comin' off; then up comes our fish, takes a look, and goes down — acted just like a trout, leary but wantin' the bait. Like a trout, too, he was scarcely gone when he was back — on the rush, and this time he took the squirrel. Then George thrown in the live one—closer to the boat than I did mine, but the fish nailed him before he wiggled a foot.

"This time we got a notion of that fish. He got scared quick as he took the meat, turned like a flash — down and out into the lake; and as he turned we glimpsed the white of his belly for his whole length.

"Well, sir, by Gawd! right then we commenced figurin' how to catch that fish — figurin' that and what kind of fish he was and how come he there.

"At first we wanted to catch him just to be a-catchin' him, but then George said maybe his meat would sell. That got me thinkin' we could likely sell him to a museum or something, and George, he thought so too.

"We went out every day and fed him rabbits and woodrats till he follered the boat for 'em, but if we made a sudden move away he went to the place we seen him at first. That was his hangin' out place.

"There was holes up that end of the lake where no one'd found bottom, so we sized it up there was no bottom there and he'd come up from below, some place. The reason we thought that was a book we read that was wrote by a Frenchman. It told about some people that went down into the ground and found fish and animals there that was left over from early times.

"George said he didn't believe there was things alive so far

down as the book said, but maybe there was lakes down a ways that held fish like ours. You see this fish was different from anything we knowed, except a trout; and there he was as big as all the trout in the state.

"Well, we had him located, and we was for catchin' him before others seen him and fished for him till he wouldn't bite. So while we got him tamed up we was framin' our tackle, decidin' on a shark hook and a line of lariats — they had strength without being thick.

"We rigged our line to the stern, good and solid, intendin' to drag the bait with the boat just movin'; then when we got a bite we could jam on speed and jerk him. A steam launch would be an awkward reel — we knowed that — but George thought he could play him without capsizin', and I was willin' to risk it.

"We wasn't troubled gettin' a bite; that fish took our rabbit bait like he was as anxious as we was. I was doin' signalman. I hollers as soon as I seen he had the hook, and George thrown in the speed. I had a tight holt for big disasters; there wasn't none, the old launch fetched up kind o' sudden, but she started again as quick, and in comes our line. The hook had broke at the barb, and we was alone.

"At first we was disappointed, but we went back at sundown and throwed out some vermin. The fish was there, and he et 'em all, so we felt encouraged.

"Next day we got a new hook, lookin' careful for flaws, and goes over to the point. John L. (We named him that because he was strong) he took all our bait but the chunk on the hook. He favored a trout in all his ways.

"So we trout-fished for him — we went after him at daybreak when the foxiest trout is apt to take a chance. And the rule held good.

"He bit eager; and this time our tackle held till he dragged us fifty foot out into the lake; then he started for bottom, or whatever there was down there. The launch follered stern-first and nose in the air. I was going to jump personally, but the hook came out and we righted. Didn't happen to have him hooked solid — and a lucky happen-so.

"We took stock of the boat — only waterlogged and generally shook up — but we felt down-hearted. We seen our plant was too light for such heavy draggin's, but we was too busy swearin' to see a row boat come up till it was right close.

"This was McCormack in the boat. He is important in this fishin' because we took him partner.

"It was this way! He starts out askin' us what in Hell had we caught or had caught us? Seein' he was fixed for guessin', I told him. I wanted to keep to ourselves what fun and money was in sight, but I seen now we had to have capital. I happened to know McCormack had money and a donkey-engine, so his occurrence seemed providential. I liked his looks too, and I told him all about John L. By Gawd! I had to do the talkin'. George was occupied sayin' silence in sign-language. He was a distrustful Swede.

"We got together from the start, for McCormack took a real interest in John L. Of course I had to talk to George private — this was after we all was at the shack. Then we held a general session. McCormack offered to put the financin' against our rights of discovery and divide the proceeds even, so it was agreed that way, and we shook hands on it. He said our idea of gettin' the fish before we made any move to sell him was business, but he had a better scheme for a market. He knew some Seattle men on the Fair Exhibit Commission, and thought we could sell to the State. George and me was in for that.

"McCormack was for getting John into a tank alive, but when he went out and seen him rise for his breakfast he agreed that he was over husky to take chances on hivin' him. So we framed up to get a donkey from Mack's camp and bait and hook him as before, only with a steel line and the donkey on shore instead of the launch a-floatin'. Then we could give him line if he took it strong, but the first in-rush he made we would wind him right up into the woods. Mack got a special hook made too — out of a swamp-hook. It would have held a battleship.

"George and me herded the fish, while Mack got his donkey shipped.

"We thought we could keep the whole thing dark, but the day Mack got back there was a newspaper scare about a sea-serpent

in Lake Washington. They treated it as a joke, but we read John L. for sea-serpent, and we didn't laugh.

"By Gawd, we was leary! Mack had to arrange for right o'way to get his engine from the railroad to the lakeside; that aroused curiosity. Then George has to go to town and hit up the booze. Naturally he made some brags around. Oh, nothing much! but we was nervous. We certainly didn't want no crowd around when we undertook to hoss John L. up into the timber.

"We needn't have been scared. Everything went perfect, like it was on the stage, even the weather,— a clear dawn after a wet night, and John's habits so far as known was trout habits.

"And the way we caught that fish, when we had things right, was so easy we was ashamed. Mack was runnin' the donkey, which was set up a skid road about fifty yards. There was nine hundred foot of half-inch line on the drum, so we could have our bait out a hundred and fifty yards and leave some line in case John proved stronger than the donkey on the first rush — we wasn't under-estimatin' him none. The bait was a woodrat — we had found he liked that best of what we could offer — and we put a small float to keep it up, runnin' the line over drift shingle-bolts for the same purpose.

"George and me made them arrangements while day was breakin'. As soon as it was good and light, out we goes to coax in our fish. We done it at the expense of two rabbits and a gray tom-cat George had shot some place.

"John, he comes in, zigzaggin' after the critters quick and easy; it was pretty to see, only I thought of that since. By when he took the cat, which we thrown out last, you could see every move he made though he was hid by the dark water. It was deep there, but he almost dragged bottom. He rose to the cat about twenty yards to one side of the boat.

"I signals Mack, and he starts his engine up a little — just enough to move the bait and attract John's attention.

"George throws in full speed ahead at the same time, but we scarcely started when our fish bites. I signals Mack for the jerk and he puts on full engine speed too.

"By Gawd! John L. gives one jump, clear out of water — the whole length of him! The surf he thrown up almost ship-

wrecked us. When he hits the water he hits it with his nose pointed for shore at a thirty degree angle to the line — see? And he makes his rush the way he was pointed.

"Mack takes this in, so he keeps her a-windin' full speed, and John comes round in a semi-circle to the shore below the donkey. He comes mostly on his own power, but the point is he comes. Before we got the launch through half the white water he kicks up, he was high and dry and had demolished a half-acre of huckleberry brush. There he come off the hook, quick as he got an inch of slack, and swung crossways behind some trees.

"I yells to Mack to shoot him for Gawd's sake; I was scared he would make it back into the lake. Mack couldn't hear me, but he has the same idea. He grabs up my Winchester and pumps it empty into poor old John L.

"By when George and me got to the wreck he had made of them woods, he was only wrigglin' his fins — just a-quiverin' 'em.

"Personally I was as tickled as a snake with a new skin; I guess the others felt the same way. We shook all round and sized up our prey. He was marked like a Dolly Varden trout, and he was sure long, but he was like Heck's trout — it was his chest measurement that told the tale, for he was built like a humpy salmon might be if one got to be that big.

"But them points was scarcely realized when we hears a whistle and here comes a steamer, standin' in to where we was. They was on their early trip and seen the flash of John's belly when he jumped clear. So we had spectators from that time. Before noon, half Seattle was over there.

"He was a bigger fish than we'd had any idea of — the more we looked the bigger he got. And he come in for plenty of notice. A fish professor put a long name to him, but I always think of him as John L.

"Mack, he sold him to the State, the way we aimed, but he got a longer price than I expected — let alone George. My share would have give me a start if I'd took care of it. Yes, sir, by Gawd!"

And Angus went back to his bunk and made him a cigarette.

I have left out the interruptions in this story, but there were mighty few and none from Heck. He listened to Angus close,

which was different from his custom with any one. Every time Angus hinted how big his fish was, Heck sat right up, and he seemed disappointed too when no figures was given.

He wasn't the only one that wanted statistics. When Angus finished, there was a general question chorus: "What'd he weigh?" "How long?" "Didn't yuh measure him?"

Angus stooped to get a fresh sack of "Durham", and his face was in the shadow.

"We didn't weigh him accurate," he said, "but when we pulled him out it lowered the lake three feet."

"I believe that's a lie!" yells Uncle Heck and walks right out of the bunkhouse.

"Well!" says Angus to me, "well, by Gawd!"

The Blue Shirt of Tauolo.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

IF it were possible to construct a chart showing the distance between heaven and the more thickly populated parts of the earth's surface, the East End of London would hold the long-distance record. This assertion is built on the props of truth which defy contradictions. The distance between Spitalfields and salvation is painful for the pious to contemplate.

With this knowledge in one's mind, it is difficult to understand why missionaries pass over such a tract when searching for suitable fields of labor. But missionaries steer clear of the East End. Mindanao, Timbuctoo, Pingelap, Banjermassin, and ten thousand other spots on the world's rim, call them with a voice that is soft and insistent, and they go forth to the naked one with enthusiasm in their hearts, and a tract-stuffed portmanteau in their hands. Somebody once remarked that "Distance lends enchantment to the view," and there is good reason to believe that person was a missionary.

This is a story of retribution. It is the story of the Reverend Gideon Plumlop and a shirt. A shirt is a peculiar garment to bracket with a missionary, but Fate has an eye for the importance of little things, and often chooses an insignificant object with which to perform great deeds. And this shirt was, if one might judge it by its price, an insignificant shirt. It had been purchased at Goldberg's on the Mile End Road for the sum of ninepence halfpenny — just nineteen cents in American money.

The Reverend Gideon Plumlop was born in Shandy Street near the East London cemetery, and he was born poor. This was unfortunate. The influence of poverty is bad when it makes the poverty-stricken ashamed of being poor. And Gideon was much

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ashamed. The poverty of his parents annoyed him, and from his earliest childhood he detested Shandy Street and its horrible environments. While quite a child he endeavored to make people believe that he walked barefooted because he disliked boots, and at ten he had earned the reputation of a snob.

But Gideon was lucky. He was a saintly snob, and a wealthy lady from Belgravia who went "slumming" in search of excitement for her jaded nerves, took an interest in him, and she provided the funds to train him for the ministry. But he remained a snob.

When Plumlop became a fully qualified spiritual guide one would have thought he would have returned to labor in Shandy Street where his parents still lived. He knew well that the percentage of souls that enter heaven and register from Whitechapel is lower than that from any other quarter of the globe, but he put the knowledge from him. The odors of the East End stirred painful memories. He remembered the barefooted days, and in his dreams he pictured himself spreading the word to the undressed inhabitants of the South Sea.

And Gideon's dreams came true. The Foreign Missionary Association was at that time much concerned about the nude person in the Pacific, and Plumlop received an appointment at Pualala, an outlying island of the Gilbert Group. Here, one hundred and seven souls, to use the expression of the Bishop of Melanesia, "wallowed in their ungodliness," and Gideon got busy.

His success was remarkable. It was unique. Whether it was that the inhabitants of Pualala were in that stage of artistic expectancy when a change of any old kind is welcomed, or whether Gideon's oratory was more than usually convincing, is not known, but within four months of his landing he had converted fifty. Amongst this half hundred was Tauolo, the headman, and although their knowledge of Christianity was elemental, Plumlop ceaselessly drummed at them in spite of the taunts of the fifty-six scoffers.

It was at the end of the four months that Fate introduced the shirt. The Bishop of Melanesia contemplated a long tour of his scattered diocese, and the Reverend Gideon Plumlop was determined that his half hundred would look as saintly as possible in

the eyes of the Bishop. In his opinion uncovered limbs gave a person an irreligious appearance, and as the bishop would not reach Pualala for many months, Gideon wrote a letter to his mother in Shandy Street asking her to collect cast-off clothing for his converts.

It was then that Mrs. Plumlop found the shirt. The order to collect clothes for her son's colored congregation so disturbed the poor woman that, with tears in her eyes, she confided her troubles to the proprietress of a boarding house near by, and, quite unexpectedly, received comfort. A boarder had died at the friend's house, and although the doctor, doubtful of the nature of the illness, had given the landlady an order to destroy the clothing of the deceased, Mrs. Plumlop's grief so moved her that she contributed them to the heathen instead. In the bundle was the blue shirt, and Mrs. Plumlop was happy as she sent it forth to her son in the South Sea.

Tauolo, the headman, received the shirt. Its color attracted him immensely, and when Plumlop invested him with the article, he exhibited more pride than a shopgirl who is the possessor of the latest style hat. When the other articles were distributed, the contented missionary sat down to await the arrival of the bishop.

But Nemesis was charging down at full speed upon the Reverend Gideon Plumlop. Ten days after Tauolo received the shirt he sickened and died. His two wives followed him. His five brothers, six uncles, and eleven cousins, who, through living in the same hut, had come in contact with the blue shirt, went next. The missionary was astounded. One after the other his fifty converts were stricken with the mysterious disease that killed Tauolo, and in a month he was alone with the naked scoffers who, luckily for themselves, received no gifts from the parcel that came from Shandy Street.

But the scoffers were now clothed in righteous rage. Many of their relatives were amongst the dead, and they execrated Plumlop and shook their spears at the mission hut. All through the day they held loud pow-wows to decide what they should do, and on the third day after the death of the last convert, they bore down in a body on the hut, and Gideon entrenched himself inside.

Five months afterwards, the Bishop of Melanesia, speaking at Auckland, told the story of the martyrdom of the Reverend Gideon Plumlop of Pualala, and his audience wept as the bishop told how he himself had removed from the head of the dead martyr an old blue shirt which the good man's mother had sent out from London to clothe the heathen. But the bishop was lucky. He had not reached Pualala till four weeks after Gideon's death, and the disease germs in the blue shirt had succumbed to the sweet breezes of the Pacific.

The One Phobia.*

BY HARRIS MERTON LYON.

E went to bed that night in a preoccupied fashion, thinking of a conversation he had had at the club with a well-known expert in nervous diseases. Of all the thousand phobias to which the brain is heir, his mind dwelt upon but one, and dwelt upon that one insistently—hypsophobia; and the reason for this was that it was his one greatest fear, this dread of high places, this fear of looking down from a lofty height. To him a steeplejack was the most marvelous phenomenon in animate creation. It was terrifying at times, this horror he had. He could not, in walking across a bridge, look down at the water without becoming dizzy, without wishing to throw himself into the stream beneath. He could not ride upwards in an elevator without becoming faint at thought of the height to which he had ascended. He was afraid to stand out upon a fire escape, he did not dare to look out of a fourth story window upon the street below. There was always a haunting consciousness within him that he would involuntarily let himself fall out of the window.

Tonight he had listened to the physician's idle, yet interesting, chat without revealing this weakness of his own, and had followed with caught breath the detailing of symptom after symptom identical with those which he himself experienced. With these things in his mind he went to bed.

. . . . . .

When he awoke it was broad day and the sky was overcast with a garish green light such as the light which precedes a storm or a hurricane. He himself felt decidedly nervous and queer, as if laboring under a strange tension, but this he attributed to the atmospheric conditions about him; possibly, also the eye-strain of

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which he frequently complained had something to do with this present light-headedness. He remembered to have drunk a large pot of coffee the night before; the caffeine would be sure to affect him thus. And yet — was his condition really due to these outward, evident causes? There seemed to be more than that to affect him. There seemed to be an impulse subtly at work, straining at his will, trying to lure him, to draw him somewhere. What was it? He did not greet the morning as a man refreshed by sound sleep. He tried to think: Had he dreamed any ghastly dream during the night which would still influence him, which would pursue him even into his waking hours? Yes, he remembered that he had!

What had he dreamed? He struggled to get his wits together and consider the events of the past night. He found himself bathing his eyes in cold water in order to shock himself into clear-headedness; he pulled the stopper out of a camphor bottle, and let the penetrating odor bite its way into his befuddled brain; he remembered that he was mechanically dressing himself; he had the sensation of going through movement after movement of this sort, all the while vainly groping in his memory.

Of a sudden he stopped. "Great God," he said to himself, "I know now what it was!" He had dreamed, amid some awful, horrid setting, that he saw his body, his dead body, somewhere. It lay face downward, with the arms spread out. Yes, he recalled these items in the dream now, perfectly clearly. The rest was laborious work. What else had happened? Was there any other sensation? With the feeling of a peevish child, he realized that he could not think. All he knew was that he had dreamed he was dead; and that the nightmare pursued him even now, into the sickly light of a new day. He shuddered with uneasiness and looked about him apprehensively. The carpet, the chairs, the books — everything seemed strange; there was a wan, colorless, impalpable quality to each bit of familiar furniture, no doubt due to the pale light of the heavens. The hushed closeness of the place was sickening to his overwrought nerves. He felt that he must get out of there before he shrieked aloud. He could not bear the image of that dream-corpse before his mind's eye, ghastly, motionless, in sharp relief.

Moreover, there was a steady, insistent, weirdly unpleasant attraction at work upon him, something impelling him to leave, drawing him as if by unseen threads, out of his room and down on to the street. Whither was it calling him? He felt it, but could not guess its meaning. He wondered vaguely what it was all about; he tried in vain to analyze his physical condition. Hyperæsthesia? Hysteria? He hardly thought so. It must be the weather. He started to ring for some coffee, and then bethought him that the beverage would only make things worse. He glided to the window and drew up the blind. He had never seen such a sky. It was flat, oppressive, and pale green in color, the color of sea water when a diver opens his eyes a fathom beneath the waves. There was no sun, no clouds. He glanced at his watch, but his troubled eyes could not distinguish whether it was eight o'clock or twenty minutes to twelve. More than likely, he concluded, it was twenty minutes to twelve. In that case he had slept exactly eight hours!

He marveled at the untrustworthiness of his eyes; a slight fog seemed to roll and tumble across the scope of his vision, and he mentally noted that he must have the orbs examined and adopt spectacles hereafter — a thing he had been intending to do ever since he first felt the strain upon them.

All the time, as he stood revolving these matters, he felt the vague impulse at work in him, the impulse which he could not fathom; it seemed like a gnawing at his brain.

With a gesture of impotent disgust at his own weakness this morning he turned his gaze again out the open window. Slowly he took in the old, familiar landmarks, the news stand on the corner, the grocery opposite, the gaudy cigar sign half a block down the street, the barber shop — and then! His brain swam giddily with a sense of surfeit. He had found the answer to the impulse!

A stone's throw from where he stood, looming gray and soft against the background of the monotonous sky, and seeming higher than the skies themselves, he espied a lofty office-building in the course of erection. Steel girders protruded two hundred feet or more into the air; three of the stone sides had already been set into place; on the fourth side a spider's web of scaffolding covered the entire wall, and at the highest point on this scaffold-work he saw

a solid wooden platform such as workmen use as a support. It must be twelve feet square, yet from where he stood it seemed no larger than the top of his centre table. What it was that seized him and hurried him on he could never have told; a mad notion, perhaps, that he would satisfy this insistent craving, that he would quiet this nervous unrest, much as a wrecked drunkard seizes drink, as an opium fiend eats additional quantities of the drug. He snatched up his hat, burst out of the door, and ran.

Events thereafter raced past his mental vision with the swiftness of a cinematograph, quivering, fluttering, coming rapidly out of obscurity into the glare of his illuminating brain-heat. He seemed to move viciously in quick jerks, down the stairs, out on to the stale streets, past unheeding groups of people who stared at him like ghosts, into the building — had a delirium stolen into his blood this morning? — up ladder after ladder, triumphantly mounting, amazed at his own bravery. Where was his hypsophobia now? What would he do when he reached that platform? He did not know. He remembered every nail in that last ladder, and yet it seemed to him he had come up it as swiftly as if he had been shot out of a mortar. He looked back. No one was following him. He felt of his heart. It was beating at a fearful rate with hard, dry thumps against his ribs.

In a flash he was out upon the platform, his brow bared to the breeze, exultant, glorious in the high air. How clean it all was up there! He looked over toward his own room and laughed gaily. It seemed to him that he was a bird, soaring and swimming in the ether, rinsed by all the purity of the upper sky, free and joyous, sustained, swooping gently in great rings, up, up, up . . .

Suddenly he felt a blinding stroke across his eyes, a yawning at the pit of his stomach, something choking him like a ball or an apple lodged in his throat, and he caught himself leaning fascinated at the very edge of the planking. The reason of this was that his hat had fallen from his hand and in sickening little circles was drifting earthward. His nervous fingers clung to the trembling woodwork, he found himself unaccountably stretching up on tiptoe, he could not catch a breath while the black bit of headgear, with many a coil and spiral, let itself gently down. He tried to turn his eyes away and could not. The old fear had returned upon

him. The blood fleeing from his skin, had left the sweat upon his brow as cold as the sweat upon a corpse. He no longer felt the first exhilaration, the uplift of his senses. A certain cowardice struck into the very marrow of his bones and left him dizzy and shaken before his impending fate.

All was changed. The gusts of wind, instead of bringing a sense of freedom, now roared about his ears so violently that they terrified him; he imagined he saw the scaffolding rock to and fro, and even felt the stone walls sway slightly beneath his hand. A great dread rushed over him that this breeze would blow him off of the platform. He looked rashly down and his eyes were blurred by the sight of a myriad of pigmy objects, human beings crawling about like ants, carriages and wagons appearing as tiny bugs or beetles, streets as ribbons, houses as little cardboard playthings.

The rapidity with which his mind worked seemed inconceivable. He paid scarcely any attention to the phenomenon, yet felt indistinctly that his brain was clicking off its pictures more swiftly than a camera's shutter, that each tiny scene was thrown out before him as a film, bitten by the developing fluid, flashes out its negative presentation.

Once more his stomach yawned; then all consciousness seemed to swoon. His thoughts swirled and reeled and swirled in a wild tumult; a mælstrom seemed sucking him in, and he felt seasick; vast noises roared through his head, as if his blood were congested there; red and green colors rotated before his eyes; his teeth were clenched together, and his tongue was dry; and always around and around in a tremendous mental whirlpool his thoughts spun and swung, spun and swung like a grotesque, irresponsible, crazy pendulum. His vibrating nerves had the sensation of cracked, twanging wires. His throat was completely stopped now by the round ball he had swallowed. Where had he swallowed it? He doubled up with fear, racking each tendon to its uttermost tautness. And then there was another change.

Far below him the pigmy people started coming up, sailing toward him in a great dream, growing larger and larger. The cabs left off their bug-like semblance and slowly grew into cabs; the ribbons became white streets. Things seemed metamorphosing as through ages of slow evolution. He was watching this with

lulled senses when, in a terrible flash, he realized that he was falling!

It was *he* who was dropping toward the earth, *he* who had left the platform! His whole sequence of living flashed across his mind like one long, disjointed streak of lightning. Half-seconds seemed like millions of glorious, golden years, filled with the rarest passions, the most poignant pains. But above every other feeling loomed Fear like an awful god, eternal, relentless; the Fear that, siren-like, had lured him to the top of this tower, the Fear that had fascinated his eyes, the Fear that was now squeezing his body with an unendurable force. A great hand seemed to crush him, even as he fell. In mid-air he shrieked, shrieked with a long, spasmodic wail, and when his voice was at its highest his heart swelled in his bosom and snapped.

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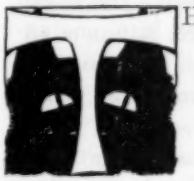
The maid, on entering his room next morning, found the occupant prone on the floor, dead. His features were violently distorted and wrinkled almost beyond recognition. He had evidently fallen out of bed about midnight.

Letter-Heads.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.



THE advertisement appeared but once in the "Male Help Wanted" columns of a morning paper. It read:

> **SEVEN** small, neat, bald-headed men will be paid handsomely for a brief engagement. No soliciting. BURKE, room 427, Fox Bldg.

The elevator boy at the Fox Building was a colored lad, and his stove-polish grin gradually encroached upon his ears as he lifted cage after cage-full of neat little bald-headed men to the fourth floor. They came in such numbers that it would seem that every wife, mother or sister who had a neat little bald-headed man about the house had polished him up spick and span and sent him forth to answer the advertisement.

By noon of the following day the number fell off to an occasional applicant who would descend from the fourth floor looking greatly disappointed. The favored seven had been chosen and a notice to that effect posted on the door of room 427.

Two weeks later there appeared simultaneously in various sections of the city seven dapper little men, who no sooner removed their hats than there was disclosed to view a device more striking than the poet's classic "Excelsior." On the shining crown of each little man's bald head, written in a new growth of silky hair, were the words

A S K
M E

The public immediately became a smiling interrogation point, and it was learned from these human letter-heads that sometime during the following month there would be placed upon the market a hair-restorer warranted to grow hair on the stubbornest bald

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head in two weeks' time. The words "Ask Me" were material proof of the hair restorer's claims.

"Gentlemen, it is not merely an instance of 'heir expectant,' but an instance of 'heir apparent to the crown,' said one of the seven little men, who had developed into a wit under the exhilaration of a second growth of hair.

Men who had been bald for ten, twenty, some thirty years, and had long forgotten the price of a hairbrush, gazed into one another's eyes with dawning hope and encouragement, and the seven little men went about publishing the good news broadcast, wined and dined by an interested public.

Certain established manufacturers of proprietary hair medicines circulated the report that the human letter-heads were not, and had never been, bald, but that their heads had been shaved, leaving only the device, "Ask Me."

The seven little men hotly denied this aspersion upon their honor and their baldness, and the wittiest of them struck off a pamphlet entitled, "A Crown Seven Years Without a Heir," which sold like a baseball extra.

It was now that something unforeseen occurred. The discoverer and sole possessor of the marvelous hair-restorer was accidentally injured on the head by a falling mortar, and lost all recollection of his great secret. For better security he had told no one of the chemical formula of the restorative, and for the same reason he had not placed the formula in writing, and the seven little bald-headed men gasped when they learned the true state of affairs and realized the predicament in which they were placed.

They must now go through life with the device "Ask Me" written across their heads by nature's indelible hand, unless they possessed the courage to have it removed hair by hair by the electric needle, or — ignoble resort — shaved their heads frequently, like so many Chinamen.

One of their number — the wit — suddenly arose and left the room where they had gathered to discuss the situation. A few minutes later it was recalled that he had boasted of having in his possession a vial of the precious hair restorative, and his six friends arose and hurried after him.

But the wit had aroused his strapping wife and boys to the exi-

gencies of the situation, and safely, behind barred doors, he coolly applied to his scalp a liberal quantity of the marvelous hair-producing fluid.

From his window he could see his late companions-in-advertisement gathered on the sidewalk looking wistfully and enviously at his door and he pitied them from the bottom of his heart. But there remained only sufficient restorative to grow one full head of hair, and if any one needed hair he did.

He rubbed into his scalp the precious drops of golden liquid and wiped his fingers on his chin.

"Friends can always be had," he meditated thoughtfully, "but hair once gone returns no more!"

One by one his late companions dispersed, as they realized the utter futility of protest or appeal under the circumstances, and the wit remained locked in his room for a week, at the end of which period he sallied forth with a luxurious growth of silky red hair, such as he had not possessed even as a boy.

But he found his friends lighter hearted and more forgiving than he had expected. They had discovered that by letting the device "Ask Me" grow to a good length it could be skilfully brushed and parted to represent a full head of hair, and this discovery had softened their hearts toward their more fortunate companion.

The discoverer of the formula is at the present time being tenderly watched and guarded by a secret league of bald-headed men, for his interest is also their interest, and in the words of the president of the league: "If memory should again re-light her extinguished torch in the mind of this genius, fame and fortune will find their way to his lodge, though it were in a trackless wilderness."

The Haunted Pesos.*

BY FREDERICK FERDINAND MOORE.

TWO thousand Filipinos were standing in line before the window of the paymaster of the Army Transport Service, waiting to get their wages for the week, in bright new silver pesos.

"I hope," said Felipe Lopez, a cargo checker, "that none of my pesos will have the mark of blood on them. It is bad enough to work six days in the hot sun for twenty pesos, but after you get them it is worse to have the ghost of a miser running through your house trying to take them away from you, and probably kill you in the bargain."

Francisco Basa, a laborer, who was next to Lopez in the line, shivered and rolled a cigarette to steady his nerves.

"What is this about the haunted pesos?" he asked.

"What!" exclaimed Felipe, "have you not heard? All the Filipinos know the story. Have you not heard of the American miser who saved his silver pesos until he had a room full of them in a house in Paco? And how he was robbed and killed, and cursed the robber with his dying breath, and swore that every peso would have a drop of blood on it and that he would haunt every man who kept or used the money? Everybody knows of the story."

The natives near Felipe drew up to him with terror in their faces and asked about this awful story of the haunted pesos, for Filipinos are very superstitious and believe in ghosts and bad omens and evil eyes and curses.

"It is a very simple tale," said Felipe, when they pressed him to tell them about the haunted pesos. "There was an American who saved all the pesos he earned as a government engineer. He had his house half full of them out in Paco. It is the house

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where Ledesma, the Filipino patriot, lived before the war with the Americans, and you all know it. It has a yard and tall iron fence around it and no one lives there now, for the spirit of the miser haunts it. He has been seen walking through the grounds by night and no one dares go near it.

"Some American soldiers killed him and took the money. They cut his throat with a saber. As he was lying on the floor, dying, they filled sacks with the pesos. He cursed them as he was lying in his blood, and said that whoever should have a peso of his would be haunted. 'You will bring these pesos back here' he told them, 'and throw them into my yard by night. I will haunt you until you do it and then I will strangle you in your beds as you sleep. And any man who shall have one of these pesos and use it for his benefit in any way will have my curse, and unless he comes and throws the pesos into my yard, I will haunt him as long as he lives, and will strangle him and his wife and children. These pesos shall be known by a spot of my blood over the eagle. Sometimes it will not be there and sometimes it will be seen. When that spot of blood comes over the eagle on the peso, it is a warning, and unless it is thrown into my yard by night I will kill the man who keeps it or gives it in trade for goods for his household or food or drink for himself and children. This curse I put upon all who shall handle my pesos, and then he died, spitting blood at the robbers, which fell on the silver coins.

"Last week," continued Felipe, "I found two pesos in my pocket with the spot of blood on them. It was not there when I got the money, but the blood spots came out while it was in my pocket. I knew it was the miser's curse and warning, so that night I went to Paco and threw them into the yard of the house where the miser lived. They are there now, and whoever wants them may get them, unless the ghost of the miser has taken them away. I knew better than to use the money — I want no bony fingers at my throat in the night — I want to wake up in the morning. So you may save your lives and the lives of your wives and children if you heed my counsel. If you find some day that you have a haunted peso, I would advise you to throw it back to the miser.

"The robbers were all killed. The three of them were found

dead, one after the other, and on their throats were the red marks where the fingers of the miser's ghost had strangled them, and their tongues were hanging out and their faces were blue and their eyes staring, as if they could see the spirit of the man they robbed. It all came to pass as he said it would. A Filipino was found last week in a town in Cavite, strangled in his bed. No one knew who had killed him. But a friend of mine told me that a peso with a spot of blood on it was found in his room. I said nothing, but of course it was a haunted peso, and that is why he died. Perhaps he did not know of the curse. But I do, and if I ever find another peso with the blood on it, I know where it will go. You may do as you choose, but I love my life too well to sell it for a peso."

The paymaster wondered why every man who was paid that day examined his pesos carefully before leaving the window. He supposed there were counterfeits in circulation and that the laborers were afraid of getting bad coins.

Francisco Basa, the man who had asked Felipe to tell him the story of the haunted pesos, looked at his money the next morning, and was horrified to discover that two of his pesos had the fatal blood spots.

He called his wife and in terror they both agreed that they were possessed of haunted pesos, and that they would hurl them into the yard of the Paco house as soon as it became dark. The two pesos were sadly needed, it was true, but what were two pesos, if throwing them back to the miser would protect them from his curse?

So after his day's work loading and unloading ships, Francisco went to Paco, shivering with fear, and imagining that every palm tree along Calle Real concealed the spirit of the miser, and that the terrible ghostly fingers were reaching for his throat.

There seemed to be a great many Filipinos hurrying along Calle Real. They all went by the Ledesma house in the darkness and then started back the way they had come from Manila.

Francisco furtively threw his pesos over the fence and went back to the city with the others. When he had come to the Lu-

neta, where the band was playing, he met Pascual Romero, who also worked for the government unloading steamers.

"Where have you been, Pascual?" he asked.

"I have been in Paco," replied Pascual. "Let us walk around and hear the band play. How is your wife's brother doing with his fish store?"

"Good," replied Francisco, but his mind was not on the fish store.

"I found two haunted pesos in my purse this morning," said Francisco, his fingers trembling as he lit a cigarette.

"You were lucky," said Pascual, "I had the misfortune to find that I had four. I threw them back to the miser and glad I am that I did so. Have you kept yours?"

"Mother of God, no! I cast the accursed things away. Does a man risk his life for two pesos?"

"Others have found the blood spots on their money, I am told. There is no mistaking them. The spots show over the eagle. They are spots of dried blood and there can be no doubt that they are the miser's coins."

For three months the two thousand Filipinos employed by the government in the transport service found haunted pesos, and every week they journeyed to Paco by night and threw the coins into the yard of the Ledesma house. Then they found no more and came to the conclusion that the spirit of the dead miser had his own again and was at peace. They were well pleased, for they found their wages were being depleted by the tribute to the ghost of the pesos.

But no one had been strangled. So the story told by Felipe Lopez had warned all the natives of Manila and had doubtless saved many lives.

It is a pity that some facts bearing directly on the haunted pesos must in justice be told to those who have followed the tale this far.

Some weeks before Felipe Lopez told his story, a chemist employed in the government laboratory at Manila was sharing a room with a man from Connecticut. The latter was employed in the Philippine treasury and made up the money for the